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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000724

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR D, AF/SPG, AF/PD, AND DRL
DEPARTMENT PASS USAID FOR OTI, AF/EA
WHITE HOUSE FOR M. GERSON
NSC FOR DR. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KPAO](#) [OPSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: WEST DARFUR: SUDO LIKELY CLOSED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
PROJECTS

REF: A. KHARTOUM 722

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 670

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Andrew Steinfeld; Reason: 1.4(b)
and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Sudan Social Development Organization, a USAID-supported Sudanese NGO, had not worked according to its mandate and had to be closed down, West Darfur Governor Gaffar Abdel Hakam told Charge Steinfeld during a March 20-21 visit to El Geneina. The Governor, however, refused to explain what work SUDO had done outside its mandate, and rebuffed further attempts to discuss the matter. One UN official suggested that the closure might be due to SUDO's work on human rights in West Darfur -- a project funded by USAID -- as part of a broader campaign to pressure local NGOs in the state. END SUMMARY.

SUDO "Transferred Mandate," Governor Tells Charge

[1](#)2. (C) The West Darfur Government shut down the local offices of the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO) because it was "working in other areas beyond its mandate," Governor Gaffar Abdel Hakam told Charge Steinfeld on March 20; the Charge asked the Governor about SUDO's closure during a courtesy call in El Geneina, the state capital. SUDO was authorized to work in the areas of health, education, water, and sanitation, the Governor explained, but it had "transferred its mandate to others" and was "working in other areas." To resume operations, SUDO had to go to the West Darfur Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) and return with another mandate.

[1](#)3. (C) As reported in Ref. B, the West Darfur HAC closed SUDO's offices in El Geneina and Zalengei on March 11, days after the organization's chairman, Madawi Ibrahim Adam, published an op-ed in the Washington Times and met with senior officials at the White House, including President Bush. Operations outside West Darfur, however, have not been affected. SUDO has received a USD 55,000 USAID/OTI in-kind grant for human rights monitor training in El Geneina and Zalengei; approval for another USD 248,000 grant for clothing distribution to women and children victims of violence is pending in Washington.

Are You Investigating Me?

[1](#)4. (C) When the Charge asked what type of work SUDO had done

outside its mandate, the Governor retorted indignantly, "Are you investigating me?" The Charge responded that the issue had raised concerns in Washington. (Note: The Department's March 20 press statement on SUDO's closing had not been released at the time of the meeting). "We have sent a letter to SUDO, and they know what they must do. We have a Constitution in Sudan, and we must respect our Constitution," the Governor declared firmly.

HAC Knows Nothing

15. (C) In a separate meeting, West Darfur Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner Al-Tijani Tajeddin told the Charge that he had nothing to add to the Governor's statement about SUDO. (Comment: This may reflect Al-Tijani's weakness compared to a formidable Governor (Ref A), or it may just be his inexperience. An ethnic Beja, he had only recently moved to West Darfur from Kassala, where he had worked in the HAC's Office; March 20 was his first official day at work. End comment.)

UN/OCHA: Human Rights Work Behind the Closure?

16. (C) Andy Pendleton, West Darfur Area Coordinator for the UN OCHA, later told the Charge that he believed the move against SUDO was a joint effort by the West Darfur HAC and the local National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) branch. "They started investigating them a while ago for working on human rights," he noted. Pendleton had heard stories that SUDO's chairman had visited Washington, but did not think the closure was a simple case of retaliation.

17. (C) SUDO Chairman Madawi confirmed on March 22 that SUDO

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had filed a request for a new mandate with the West Darfur HAC by fax, but was subsequently told it had to present an original copy. Madawi had then sent the original by courier, but did not expect the HAC to receive it until March 23. "The HAC complained that the media was making a big fuss about this, and told me I was responsible," Madawi told the Embassy's FSN Political Specialist. The Embassy's Human Rights Officer plans to meet Madawi in the next few days, and will report on SUDO's progress septel.
STEINFELD